



Illinois County Applauds Buyouts

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Sangamon County, Illinois

Sangamon County, IL – In May 2002, major flooding occurred in the county when the South Fork of the Sangamon River reached the highest level in a 50-year period and the Sangamon River exceeding the 100-year flood elevation. It was then that the county decided to stand firm in the use of acquisitions (buyouts) as a means of protecting its citizens from the effects of flooding.



Linda Wheeland, Senior Planner with the Springfield Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission, recalls the county's participation in the State of Illinois' Buyout Program.

"At that time [alluding to the Great Flood of 1993], we had an area in the county that had been a fishing camp, probably for about 100 years. Over those years people had built cabins or placed mobile homes on the property," recalled Wheeland. "The property, known as Driftwood Acres, is located at the confluence of the South Fork of the Sangamon River and Sugar Creek. In July 1993 and again in the spring of 1994, it was completely inundated [with water]. People couldn't get in or out."

Driftwood Acres was a 55-acre parcel located entirely in the floodplain and had been used as a river camp since the late 1800s with over 40 structures. The structures and their contents were often damaged by floodwaters, access to the area was cut off, and contamination of the water occurred. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) offered a solution to use Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds to execute a buyout of the floodprone property.

"The property was owned by one individual. We didn't meet with any resistance from him as far as participation in the buyout program. He knew that it was voluntary," said Wheeland. "He lived in Texas. He had inherited the property and just allowed people who were living on it to remain there."

Preliminary approval for the project was granted in March 1996. Closeout of the project was February 1999. The total project cost was \$92,485.76. All of the structures were removed, the concrete road was excavated, and the area has returned to a natural state. The county plans to develop a wetlands-banking project on the property to offset the impact of a planned highway-construction project.

But the county didn't stop after that. "In May 2002," said Wheeland, "we had more major flooding in another area that started out as a fishing camp. People had converted cabins into permanent homes. Floodwaters nearly reached rooftops. Homes were inundated for a week."

This time, the buyout project acquired 18 properties, 16 of which had structures on Bakutis Road, located in an unincorporated area of Sangamon County. The property has subsequently been converted into South Fork Nature Reserve, the first county park. The overall project cost was a total of \$260,966.

"Initially, some of the residents were not receptive of the project," said Wheeland. "However, when we told them that they needed to bring their home up to current codes, an option which wasn't technically feasible for some of them, the majority decided to participate. Several of the homes were already elevated."

With the latest flood event in June 2008, floodwaters made its presence known on Bakutis Road as several feet of water entered the home of the sole non-participant in the buyout project, resulting in extensive damage.

Wheeland continued, "We have had major flood declarations in 1982, 1994, 1996 and 2002. Since 1993, there have been close to 100 acquisitions, in Sangamon County as a whole. That's 100 structures that will not flood. And people will not be forced to leave their homes due to flooding. They will not have to recuperate from the emotional and financial burden of having their homes damaged by floods. It lessens rescue and response efforts required. It lessens the need for non-profit organizations, like the American Red Cross, to use their resources in helping people to recover."

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County (County-wide)**

FEMA Region: **Region V**

State: **Illinois**

County: **Sangamon County**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**

Hazard Type: **Flooding**

Activity/Project Type: **Acquisition/Buyouts**

Structure Type: **Wood Frame; Manufactured Housing**

Activity/Project Start Date: **10/2003**

Activity/Project End Date: **05/2005**

Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP); State sources**

Application/Project Number: **1416.3-R**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$373,362.00 (Actual)**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Yes**

Federal Disaster #: **997 , 07/09/1993**

Federal Disaster Year: **1993**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**

Tested By Federal Disaster #: **No Federal Disaster specified**

Year First Tested: **2008**

Repetitive Loss Property? **Yes**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: **<http://www.ready.illinois.gov>**

Main Points

No Main Points were entered.



Linda Wheeland, Senior Planner for the Springfield Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission in the state of Illinois



Sangamon County's first county park was created by buyout



Home of a non-participant in the buyout program was extensively damaged during a flood event